# MR Review Essay

## Nonlethal Weapons: A British View

By Robert J. Bunker 

Hundreds of documents and articles have been published about nonlethal weapons (NLW) since the 1960s. However, few books had been published on the subject.[1] As NLW significance becomes more recognized for the operational advantages they provide in Western urban and "failed-state" settings, more books are appearing. Malcolm Dando's book *A New Form of Warfare: The Rise of Nonlethal Weapons* and Nick Lewer and Steven Schofield's book *Nonlethal Weapons: A Fatal Attraction? Military Strategies and Technologies for 21st-Century Conflict* are two of the first books to appear.[2] All three authors are academics with ties to the fields of peace studies and conflict resolution.

In their own ways, both books represent significant contributions to NLW literature and, therefore, belong in every military officer's professional library. The books are useful overviews of recent NLW historical development and employment, do an excellent job of covering various NLW technologies, fully discuss the ethical and legal implications surrounding NLW, provide us with an "over-the-seas" perspective and are well researched. However, neither book contains an in-depth look at current NLW operational employment concepts—which is probably best, given this subject is outside the authors' research focus.

The books have an undercurrent of NLW "arms control." These are not "how to" books for military and police officers. They are policy-directed works attempting to influence the debate swirling around these weapons' fielding and future. As a result, readers must approach both books with the understanding that an implicit arms-control agenda exists. Therefore, I strongly caution readers to question the authors' inherent policy positions.

Malcolm Dando's book focuses on US psychochemical incapacitants and their development. Dando holds a doctorate in neurophysiology and wrote *Biological Warfare in the 21st Century*.[3] Given the focus of this current book, however, only the short second chapter, "Benign Interventions with Nonlethal Weapons?" provides an overview of more traditional NLW subjects.

Other chapters cover peacekeeping and describe the Inhumane Weapons Convention and effects of delayed-action weapons such as land mines, which is meant to be an example of the human tragedy that psychochemical NLW can cause when they are not restricted by international agreements. The book also touches on chemical agents, the human nervous system, brain chemistry and US pyschochemical incapacitants. The author's concern is the need to rethink arms control and the implications of NLW incapacitants with regard to benign interventions or a new arms race.

When thinking about the ideas in this book, I had the most trouble with the following quote: "[T]he development and fielding of many of these weapon systems will call into question the arms control regime we have so far managed to erect and will complicate efforts to proceed further with the necessary process of military de-escalation upon which stability and security will depend in the next century."[4]

While arms control may be viewed as a means to provide stability and security among some national groups, arms control is meaningless in regard to rogue states and nonstate groups. In 1957, Abba Eban, Israeli ambassador to the United States, said, "International law is the law which the wicked do not obey and which the righteous do not enforce."[5] If some US scholars' predictions are accurate and NLW do turn out to be as militarily significant as the development of gunpowder-based weapons, it is imperative that US military forces continue to lead the field.

Nick Lewer and Steven Schofield's book provides a more general treatment of NLW than does Dando's.[6] As a result, for most readers it is a far more useful and informative work. Lewer and Schofield hold doctorates and have published many works on this subject.

The book covers NLW and the post-Cold War environment; technology and the development of

NLW; policy, doctrine, strategy and operations; the legal and ethical dilemmas posed by controls and constraints; and strategic implications and NLW's future role.

A potential drawback of the book comes from the authors' traditional beliefs, which cause the book to lack cutting-edge insight. For example, because they rely on others' writings concerning the future security environment and NLW's significance, their reference to the "revolution in military affairs" has overly conservative warfighting implications.

Another concern this book raises focuses on the NLW program jointly run by the Department of Defense and the Department of Justice. The authors challenge the program because they think "the blurring of distinctions between military and civil security operations" could occur.[7] I discussed this same "blurring of crime and war" in my *Military Review* article "Failed-State Operational Environment Concepts."[8]

Lewer and Schofield do not realize that these operational distinctions had already been blurred in failed-state settings and in terrorist and other activities—piracy, air hijacking, genocide—found under the rubric of international criminal law. Because a capability gap exists in dealing with many of these activities and the failed-state environment itself, military and law enforcement cooperation on NLW development may be more of a necessity than these authors ever imagined.

The one point on which I totally agree with both books' authors is that not all NLW are benign. Yet, it may be this fact's implications where we also most strongly differ. A few years back, T. Lindsay Moore and I commented on "the potential for a new form of martyrdom based on those living, not dead" to arise from these weapons' long-term disabling capabilities.[9] The authors of these books see warfare's dark form, which could emerge from employing some of this weaponry by Western military forces, and thus seek an arms-control regime to stop it. I already see that form of warfare emerging with the return of the nonstate soldier to the battlefield, and I project it is only a matter of time before criminal-soldiers begin using nonbenign forms of NLW against US forces and noncombatants. Given such a scenario, it would be suicidal for the United States to accede to an NLW arms-control regime meant to limit interstate conflict when, in fact, the threat is intrastate war waged by non- and transnational groups at odds with the Western nation-state form.

Both books advocate the use of NLW only if such weapons were to make war less destructive and more humane. Outside of these "idealistic" parameters, these weapons are viewed with great suspicion. The authors consider it inherently immoral for these weapons to be developed to further Western military superiority in warfare. However, in a world where nonstate groups and new warmaking entities—such as cartels—are challenging legitimate political and social institutions, these weapons' advanced warfighting advantage is no longer a luxury but a necessity for US forces.[10] ***MR***

## NOTES

1.The standard work is Colonel Rex Applegate's Riot Control: Materiel and Techniques (Boulder, CO: Paladin Press, 1981).

2.Malcolm Dando, A New Form of Warfare: The Rise of Nonlethal Weapons (London: Brassey's, 1996); Nick Lewer and Steven Schofield, Nonlethal Weapons: A Fatal Attraction? Military Strategies and Technologies for 21st-Century Conflict (London: Zed Books, 1997).

3.Malcolm Dando, Biological Warfare in the 21st Century (London: Brassey's, 1994).

4.Dando, A New Form of Warfare, 205.

5.Ibid.

6.Lewer and Schofield.

7.Lewer and Schofield, 130.

8.Robert J. Bunker, "Failed-State Operational Environment Concepts," Military Review (September-October 1997), 90-92.

9.Robert J. Bunker and T. Lindsay Moore, "Nonlethal Technology and Fourth Epoch War: A New Paradigm of Politico-Military Force," The Land Warfare Papers, No. 23 (February 1996), 1-17.

10.These perceptions were echoed by Dr. John Alexander, chairman of National Defense Industrial Association's series of conferences on nonlethal weapons. See "Emerging Threats Make Nonlethal Weapons an Option in Changing World," National Defense (February 1998), 34.

*Robert J. Bunker is editor of "Nonlethal Weapons: Terms and References,"* INSS Occasional Paper 15 *(United States Air Force Academy, CO: Institute for National Security Studies), July 1997. He was a speaker at the US Army War College Annual Strategy Conference in April 1998. His* Insights *essay "Failed-State Operational Environment Concepts" appeared in the September-October 1997 edition of* Military Review.

# All That We Can Be: The Military and Minorities

## By Billy R. Dickens

The post Cold-War era forced many analysts to reevaluate the US military's role. Jingoistic concepts such as *detente*, containment and geopolitical equilibrium are relics of a former time. We now witness an epidemic of democracy spreading throughout former totalitarian regions. The US military is finding itself in an odd state of defense disequilibrium and mistaken identity. Some new demands on the Armed Forces are reflected in activities such as "nation building," drug interdiction and social engineering. One of the more problematic issues the military faces is the challenge to be more socially sensitive in securing equal opportunity for disenfranchised minorities while defense downsizing continues.

Many critics argue that the military has moved with all deliberate speed to achieve this goal. Consequently, progress has been sporadic at best. Thomas E. Hicks, writing in the July 1997 *Atlantic Monthly*, cites a growing chasm between the military and society. His provocative essay, "The Widening Gap Between the Military and Society," argues that military personnel are feeling increasingly more alienated from the society they have sworn to protect. The alternative argument stresses that the military is the best example of true meritocracy, resulting in unencumbered opportunities for all, provided individuals meet standards and expectations. Who is correct? Charles C. Moskos and John S. Butler's book *All That We Can Be* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1996) seeks to ascertain whether the military—the US Army in particular—has been successful in fully integrating disparate members into an environment that offers promise, potential and promotion opportunities.

*All That We Can Be* is an important contribution to the area of military sociology. The authors are distinguished sociology professors and decorated Army veterans. The book develops a logically consistent argument about the relationship between the military and meritocracy. Academic jargon is minimized, resulting in an exceptionally clear reading style for the nonspecialist.

Moskos and Butler provide a convincing argument that the best case for a meritocracy in American society can be found in the military culture. For example, data on Army enlistment and reenlistment rates reveal blacks signing up at higher rates than whites. This trend implies that blacks perceive the probability of bias in ability evaluation lower in the Army than in private-sector alternatives. This interpretation should not be misconstrued that the Army has eliminated racial animus. The authors are careful to point out that discriminatory treatment still occurs. What makes the Army unique is leadership's creative strategies for *managing* discriminatory behavior.

If the probability of bias in evaluating talent is lower in the Army, this should lead to a random distribution of rewards and a more level "playing field." These conclusions are supported in several cases where Moskos and Butler debunk the myths about black combat death rates, performance on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test and military promotions.

### Combat Death Rates

The prevailing myth about black combat death rates is wrapped in incendiary language: "Blacks have historically been used as 'cannon fodder' for combat missions leading to disproportionately higher death rates compared to their white counterparts." The authors show through new data on Vietnam War casualties that such accusations are not substantiated, and that parity is the norm, not the exception, relating to black and white combat deaths.

### ASVAB Test Results

The ASVAB test is another area where myths have circulated about perceived black cognitive inferiority. The authors do not deny that black applicants have lower scores on the ASVAB test. What they do emphasize is the Army's intervention role in targeting community colleges with remedial courses to aid potential applicants boost their scores and improve the probability of gaining acceptance into the Army.

### Promotions

The last myth the authors debunk is the contentious issue of who gets promoted. Some critics say this issue has been erroneously defined as being the Army's benign practice of implementing affirmative action. However, Moskos and Butler describe the Army's promotion process as an institutional arrangement where goals are *not* based on the Army's minority population as a whole but on the next higher rank's minority pool. This arrangement rewards only those who meet stringent standards and persuasively illustrates that success indeed follows sacrifice.

### Going Beyond Myths

*All That We Can Be* is valuable for reasons that go beyond those stated above. Its judicious use of data and successful debunking of politically current cliches make an air-tight argument supporting the impressive gains in the Army's ethnic diversity. For me, the single most important idea is that the Army's ethnic diversity goal is viewed as an important combat-readiness issue. All goals aimed at expanding minority representation in officer and noncommissioned officer ranks is structured as an indispensable element in fortifying military end strength.

The Army is unrelenting in not compromising its high standards of excellence. Those who meet the challenge are put in positions to move higher—those who do not simply join the rank-and-file. The Army is unique in that, as an institution, it helps minorities in the early "developmental" stages so that a "return" on the Army's investment occurs through admission and promotion. The Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute in Coca Beach, Florida, is an effective institution the Pentagon developed to combat discriminatory practices in the military. The private sector is clearly deficient in these areas and can learn some valuable lessons from the Army's experience.

The only notable shortcoming is the conspicuous absence of sociological theory and analysis of how the Army's "feminization" impacts gender relations. Theory provides the framework for explaining exactly why an institution such as the Army would be the leader in promoting meritocratic ideals relative to other social institutions. Prominent sociologists such as Christopher Jenck, William J. Wilson, Irving Kristol and Orlando Patterson have made seminal contributions in the area of race relations in a pluralistic society, but the book scarcely mentions their theoretical contributions.

The process of making conclusions solely from empirical observations is the epitome of deductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning (theory) provides an opportunity to test null-hypotheses for statistical significance. Although the book was published before the sexual peccadilloes at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, and elsewhere were known, the polarizing issue about women's access to certain combat billet positions is vintage material that warrants critical discussion. In short, the book investigates meritocracy as only a race descriptor, leaving out speculation about the effect of gender.

Theory notwithstanding, *All That We Can Be* is an important study, shedding insight on how equal opportunity can be realized in a racist environment. If the Army makes a true commitment to attaining meritocracy, it must first require enlightened leadership from those at the top. Currently, the Army appears to be in the minority in providing essential leadership, and we have Moskos and Butler to thank for making that point crystal clear. ***MR***

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